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EAST EUROPE BRANCH NOTES

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May 10, 1974

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ROMANIA

Concern Over Brandt Resignation

The Romanian media's extensive, straightforward coverage of the resignation of West German Chancellor Brandt has contained some indirect digs at Pankow. The press has quoted extensively from Brandt's resignation letter with its mention of the

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"Guillaume espionage affair." Moreover, a long article in the party daily, Scinteia, has even expressed the Romanian people's "profound regret over the circumstances which lead to the resignation." Bucharest thus appears miffed over East German bungling which will lead to a major "friendly" Western politician being replaced with an unknown quantity. Romania has played a significant role in, and benefited, from Brandt's Ostpolitik and Bucharest had also taken pains to promote good relations with Brandt personally. In addition to frustration, Bucharest's indirect barbs at East Germany reflect the less than ideal relations between the two disparate socialist allies.

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EAST GERMANY

Defense Minister Hoffman Reported Ill

The East German Defense Minister, Gen. Heinz Hoffman, is seriously ill, according to press reports, and his duties have been assumed by his deputy, Gen. Heinz Kessler, who is also chief of the GDR air force. Hoffman, 63, has been defense minister since 1960 and last year was named to the Politburo. Kessler could be a candidate to succeed Hoffman, if necessary, in both positions.

Drafted into the German army in 1940, Kessler was taken prisoner by the Soviets, or deserted to them, the following year. He attended the anti-Fascist school in Moscow and returned to Germany to play a major role in founding the Free German Youth (FDJ). In 1950, he became chief of the embryonic GDR air force and received further Soviet military training. He is regarded as a capable officer and has a reputation for insisting on intensive ideological training for the military. This attitude fits in well with the current party efforts.

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